

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by LFPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to LFPP staff to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0300

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact LFPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	4/1/2015-9/30-2015
Authorized Representative Name:	Amanda Mackie
Authorized Representative Phone:	507-345-2400
Authorized Representative Email:	amanda@mnvac.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Minnesota Valley Action Council
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	MVAC Food Hub Expansion
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-MN-099
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Mankato, MN
Total Awarded Budget:	\$100,000

LFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

Different individual: Name: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made and indicate the impact on the community, if any.
 - i. Goal/Objective 1: : Purchase and Install Food Processing Equipment and tracking software
 - a. Progress Made: An IFP 5000 food processor with attachments and accessories, melon peeler, potato peeler, bag sealer, pallet racks, pallet stacker, pallet jack, 25x25x12 walk in cooler and product tracking software have been purchased and installed. The product tracking software has made tracking our purchases and sales much easier by allowing case labeling and source to customer tracking on all incoming and outgoing product.
 - b. Impact on Community: The equipment will allow us to provide lightly processed (cut, chopped, diced & shredded) produce to local institutions. The school districts we have been in contact with indicated a major barrier to their ability to buy local was they needed food peeled, washed, and chopped, diced, or shredded. With our expanded capabilities, 3 school districts have expressed willingness to purchase shredded lettuce, Diced melons, diced squash, fresh cut potato products and carrot sticks.
 - ii. Goal/Objective 2: Move 100 tons (200,000 lbs) of food in 2015 through both institutional and CSA sales.
 - a. Progress Made: As of 9/25/15 we have moved over 90,600 pounds of locally raised vegetables. We expect to make up significant volume in September through November with sales of apples, potatoes, onions and carrots. With this level of demand and much of the season left 200,000lbs is a realistic total for all current and potential orders.
 - b. Impact on Community: School districts will be providing fresh, local produce to children, reducing the amount of food that needs to be trucked in from out of the area. 1/3 of local students qualify for low or reduced-cost lunches, and they will now have access to fresh fruits and vegetables during the school day. We have been approved for SNAP benefits for CSAs, which will allow low income families better access to Food Hub products.
 - iii. Goal/Objective 3: Work with 30 farmers in 2015
 - a. Progress Made: We have purchased locally raised food from 23 farms and plan continue to look for more farmers when we find new market opportunities.
 - b. Impact on Community: The farmers we have worked with have indicated they have increased production and planted crops specifically for the MVAC Food Hub. Several of them have hired additional labor in order to keep up with the additional harvest work. By increasing the demand for locally raised foods, we

are stimulating rural economic activity by providing a reliable market for the foods area farmers produce.

- iv. Goal/Objective 4: Sell produce to 20 institutions
 - a. Progress Made: We have delivered our fresh vegetables to 17 institutions.
 - b. Impact on Community: We have increased the ability for institutions to purchase locally by aggregating supply from a number of farms to meet the institutions specific needs.
2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 20__). Include further explanation if necessary.
- i. Number of direct jobs created: 3
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 1 fulltime, 5 part time seasonal
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created:
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 0
 - v. Number of new markets established: 1 - schools
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. It is too soon in the season to determine these amounts.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 23
 - a. Percent Increase: 22%
3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how?
By serving school districts, we have wider access to low-income children. Mankato has a significant Somali population that will also be served through the schools.
4. Discuss your community partnerships.
- i. Who are your community partners? The Food Hub has a number of community partners, including: State Health Improvement Plan, University of Minnesota Extension, Bremer Foundation, Southern Minnesota Initiative Fund, Nicollet County Social Services, Blue Earth County Social Services, Echo Food Shelf, Mankato Area Ministerial Association, and YMCA of Mankato.
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project? Bremer and SMIF provided grant funding for the initial phase of the Food Hub for equipment and build out. SHIP is a partner in awareness in the community and provided \$9,800 in grant funding to purchase carrot stick processing equipment. U of M extension is providing an on-farm food safety workshop for our producers. County Social Services is helping with awareness and promotion of the CSA to local low income families.
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?

Many of our partners are awareness partners – we will grow as we share information and identify target markets. We also anticipate continued cooperation with U of M Extension on educating our growers on the latest in on-farm food standards.

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project?

We did not use LFPP funds for any contractors.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? We were featured in multiple local newspaper stories and coverage by a local television station. We also maintain a social media presence on Facebook.
- ii. To whom did you publicize the results? We publicized our successes with our annual Warm Your Heart fundraiser in addition to reaching out to several area media outlets. We have given tours to local state representatives, state senators, and Minnesota Department of Agriculture and USDA grant administrators.
- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? Difficult to say – local media (radio, print, TV) reaches over 50,000 people. 350 attended annual fundraiser.

*Send any publicity information (brochures, announcements, newsletters, etc.) electronically along with this report. Non-electronic promotional items should be digitally photographed and emailed with this report (do not send the actual item).

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? Yes

- i. If so, how did you collect the information? Email
- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? District 77 Nutritionist and kitchen staff provided feedback that product was very good and they planned to order additional.

8. Budget Summary:

- i. As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report:
- ii. Did the project generate any income? yes
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? \$6,521 so far this season, however it is too early to provide final impact numbers. Revenues are put back into the program to pay staff wage and to purchase additional produce. We are not yet making a profit.

9. Lessons Learned:

- i. Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).

The investments made possible through this grant has greatly expanded our cold storage capacity and the variety of products we can offer. The pallet stacker and pallet racks have

allowed us to make the most efficient use of our available space and to safely handle larger volumes of produce with the same amount of labor. As an example we have been able to load multiple pallets of produce onto our delivery truck for delivery to area grocery stores in a matter of minutes. These increases in efficiency along with the capacity to offer fresh cut vegetables will significantly expand the potential markets we can access for our growers. At the time of writing this report the local school year has not yet started so we don't have a lot of experience to report on as to volume

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:

We didn't anticipate the large volume of sales commitments from a smaller number of schools, as a result we will be able to meet our volume goals for this year through fewer accounts.

- iii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:

We had anticipated delays from equipment manufacturers as well as contractors that conducted the plumbing and electrical work. As a result we were able to begin this project in the slow winter season. This allowed much of the work to be conducted without interrupting our work in the busier spring and summer season.

10. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project's work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you'd like to share about the future of your project.

The equipment purchased was selected to withstand the rigors of commercial use so we anticipate with regular maintenance that the investments made through this grant will continue to serve the goals of MVAC Food Hub for many years. This first season processing local vegetables has been a great learning experience for our staff. Information gathered during this season will be analyzed at the end of the year and will help us determine which products we will focus marketing on. Our product mix will likely change slightly from year to year as market conditions and local vegetable supplies fluctuate. Thankfully the variety of equipment we were able to purchase through this grant will allow us the flexibility to adjust to these changing conditions.

- ii. Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals?
We found that with the added capacity, additional material handling equipment will be necessary as we scale up. Shelving, tote washers, work tables, and other equipment would allow us a more efficient process. We are currently making a wish list for future opportunities.

Mankato Food Hub gets \$100k grant to slice, dice, and chop veggies for local schools

by Wendy Wilde KTOE Radio Mankato News

Edited for web by Anthony Reinhardt

October 1, 2014

The Minnesota Valley Action Council in Mankato has received a \$100-thousand dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for equipment for a Food Hub that will supply fresh, local produce to area schools.

"Schools don't want whole raw fruits or vegetables. They're looking for food that's sliced or chopped up."

Jim Gehrke administers the program. He says several southern Minnesota school districts are interested and MVAC expects the list to grow.

"We received letters of support from the Mankato, New Ulm, and Oatana school districts, as well as Gustavus College who were already supplying local food. We expect to be surveying 10 to 20 schools next year."

How does the Minnesota Valley Action Council find itself in the food prep business?

"We initially got involved in the Local Food Movement as a way of creating jobs and supporting the economy. We also wanted to encourage consumption of fruits and vegetables. It's a very different world compared to when a lot of us grew up. Most food operations and schools have been downsized to where they don't have the necessary equipment or staff to process fruits and vegetables. So, it makes a lot more sense for us to have a central location to do that, rather than trying to equip each school."

Gehrke says the food hub idea is growing.

"The whole concept of food hubs is relatively new. If you look back 20 years, there were probably 15 to 20 in the country. Now there are at least a few hundred just

because there is more interest in getting more fresh and healthy food to people and institutions."

The MVAC Food Hub also offers fresh, locally grown vegetables to residents.

"This year we kept it fairly small because we started out very late in the year. But next year we would expect to be serving at least 200 families through our CSA program. Anyone can subscribe. The cost for a family of four is \$30 dollars a week."

A half-order is available for smaller families.

The Minnesota Valley Action Council Food Hub has three full time staff, two of them seasonal, and expects to hire more workers next year.

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Send information to the News Room: [Email](#) or call [507-387-NEWS](tel:507-387-NEWS)

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FREE PRESS

10/25/14

MVAC food hub

Prepares to Expand

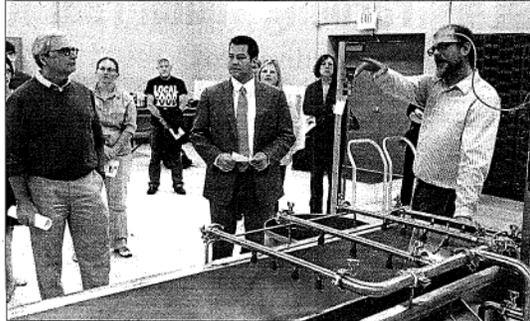


Photo by Pat Ostrum

Minnesota Valley Action Council food hub manager Joe Domeier (right) describes the hub's operation to Minnesota Department of Agriculture Assistant Commissioner Charlie Poster (center) and state Rep. Clark Johnson during a tour Friday.

State ag official tours facility

By Nate Gottlieb
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"One of our missions is trying to promote livable wages in this area. We see this as one of the ways to help with that."

MINNESOTA VALLEY ACTION COUNCIL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN WOODWICK

The Minnesota Valley Action Council food hub had a successful first few months and will likely expand in the near future, council staff said Friday.

Staff said they expect both the number of suppliers and customers to increase in the next year. They are also preparing to expand the hub, which opened in July.

They shared this vision during a tour Friday that included Minnesota Department of Agriculture Assistant Commissioner Charlie Poster and state Rep. Clark Johnson, DFL-North Mankato.

"One of our missions is trying to promote livable wages in this area," council Executive Director John Woodwick said. "We see this as one of the ways to help with that."

The council opened the food hub in late July and received a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture last month. It plans on using the money to help purchase processing equipment and inventory-tracking software.

Council awareness coordinator Jim Gehrke developed a business plan for the hub last year and won \$20,000 for the plan in the 2013 Minnesota Cup, a statewide entrepreneurial competition. The council also raised about \$200,000 from government and foundation grants. Both Woodwick and Gehrke said they see the hub as a potential revenue stream for the council.

This fall the hub has served Gustavus Adolphus College along with customers on its community-supported agriculture plan. Gehrke noted that many local school districts have expressed an interest in purchasing food from the hub.

He said the districts like to get their produce already processed, something with which the recent grant will help.

At the tour Friday, hub manager Joe Domeier showed the washing

and processing equipment to Johnson and Poster and the rest of the visitors. "We've just getting started," he told them at the end of the tour.

Johnson appeared impressed with the hub and said it could create an avenue for agriculture locally. He said he's always looking for ways of bringing different things together — something he said the hub could accomplish.

Poster also appeared impressed with the hub and noted it was the first food hub he has toured. He and his staff have been out raising awareness this month for a Department of Agriculture subsidy program.

The Farm to School grant program subsidizes schools up to 50 percent for investments that allow them to serve or purchase more Minnesota food. Schools have until

Please see HUB, Page B3

MnSCU unions withdraw from pro

By Jessica Bies
jbies@mnstatepioneer.com

Two Minnesota colleges and University of Minnesota unions have withdrawn participation in Mr. Long-term planning Charting the Future Charter Faculty Organization President Jim Grad and Minnesota State Faculty President Strom sent Chancellor Rosenstone a letter informing him of the decision made by their governing bodies.

In it, they emphasize, "Both the IFMNU and the MNCF continue to value and commit in (Charting the Future) they believe their commitment to trust and transparency on the part of MnSCU not be resolved through participation in that process."

The two unions represent more than 10,000 employees at Minnesota State University and South Central University. They are reportedly that Chancellor Rosenstone was not more open to consulting firm McKinsey & Co.'s participation in the Future.

McKinsey & Co. hired to continue to work on the project earlier this year. It paid \$2 million, reported Pioneer Press.

The unions also expressed ideas and concerns upon which Charting the Future is based upon to a set of "predefined outcomes."

A request for a student representative Chartering the Future with "open hostility," the letter. The press claim that though implementation tested by campus process and comprised of a faculty, and staff — have allowed for in the Charting the Future process, they have

The Pioneer Press that Rosenstone was the union's move was and emailed all students, faculty at Thursday afternoon. "Unfortunately," heard rumors that some of our unit decided to walk away

Hard fight for control of Minnesota House

By The Associated Press

ALBERT LEA — Gov. Mark Dayton rolled into this city's old-brick main drag this week on a mission to save Rep. Skamson Savick of Wells, eagerly shaking hands and running down reasons voters should

On Friday, Dayton was off to St. Cloud to help Rep. Zachary Dornholt, another freshman in a tough race.

That Dayton took time in the waning days of his own re-election bid to help the pair — and other vulnerable incumbents in the days to come — speaks to the

their Minnesota House majority. If that slips away, the free rein Democrats have enjoyed in state government the past two years is over.

"With a stalemated government once again, just look at Washington and you can see what happens when there is that kind of gridlock

Albert Lea coffeehouse as Savick and House Speaker Paul Thissen stood at his side.

Thissen said a renewed Democratic majority would, for starters, focus on freezing college tuition and beating up sick and parental leave laws.

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